

Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Freda and their five children, six grandchildren, and his brother.

Mr. Speaker, I again thank my colleague Mr. SWEENEY for offering this special tribute, and ask if the House would please Join me in pausing to recognize the distinguished life of Gerald Solomon.

#### COMMEMORATING NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

**HON. HILDA L. SOLIS**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 31, 2001*

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark an important yet often overlooked month in our nation's landscape National Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Each year, nearly 2 million women are victims of domestic violence. In fact, in the time that it takes me to complete this speech, eight women will have suffered some form of mental, physical or sexual abuse.

The problem of domestic violence is one that I have fought for many years.

In my district—the 31th district of California—domestic violence is a widespread phenomenon. When I first took office as state legislator in 1992, there were more shelters in my district for abused animals than there were for abused women.

But through the vigilant work and determination of our law enforcement agencies and the community, we've worked to reverse that trend. Today, we have a number of excellent shelters and non-profit organizations designed to help battered families rebuild their lives.

As pleased as I am that the shelters exist, though, I am still disappointed. Yes, every person who is the victim of domestic violence deserves as much help as possible to escape their current situation and find a better, more loving environment. But no one deserves to be placed in such a horrendous situation to begin with.

We as a nation have made remarkable strides in domestic violence legislation. We prosecute criminals. We assist victims with finding transitional housing. We help train battered housewives to reenter the workforce. These are all admirable actions. But we can and must do more.

We must work harder to ferret out the root cause of domestic violence. We know that children of batterers are more likely to become batterers themselves. We must work to ensure that these children have the necessary counseling to combat any such violent urges.

We know that immigrant women who are battered are much less likely to leave their abusers because they fear being deported. We must eliminate immigration barriers that prevent these women from getting help.

And we know that nearly one million women each year are victims of stalking. We must strengthen anti-stalking laws to protect women before violence enters the picture.

I ask my colleagues to join me in this commitment to eradicating domestic violence in our great nation, not only with our words but also with our deeds.

#### THE SERVICEMEMBERS AND MILITARY FAMILIES FINANCIAL PROTECTION ACT OF 2001 (H.R. 3173)

**HON. LUIS V. GUTIERREZ**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 31, 2001*

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, these are enormously challenging times for our country. Yet, we are doing what we can to meet these challenges. We are reaching across party lines to show national unity. We are reaching across social and ethnic lines, native-born citizens and immigrants alike, to show that we will not turn away from our nation's highest values, or from each other.

We are exercising caution and common sense. We are going about our daily lives. In my case, and that of my fellow members of Congress, going about business as usual has been a little more difficult in recent days. But—as this productive week demonstrates—it has not made our work impossible.

And, as parents, we are reminding our children how much we love them. Those are a few of the important steps that each of us is taking. And we can be proud of them. However, no group of Americans has made—or will make, as long as this effort lasts—as valuable a contribution, or as great a sacrifice, or will have as much to be proud of, as the people who are the men and women of our armed forces—full-time uniformed personnel, as well as reservists and members of the National Guard called up for active duty.

They are seeking peace for us and for our allies around the globe. Their own security has been put on hold so that we can go about our lives freely and free of fear. Last week, I introduced legislation to ease at least a handful of their many burdens.

My bill is admittedly a modest effort when compared to the full scope of challenges which they face. After all, I cannot give them the kind of blanket protection that I wish for them. I cannot ensure that no harm comes to them on the field of battle, or while in transit or training for their mission. However, it is worth remembering that among the many hazards and challenges faced by men and women in uniform, not all of them are found on the battlefield, or foreign soil, or on the high seas.

Some confront them here at home. Even while they are far from home. And, to make matters worse, they are challenges that face not only the men and women who sign up for duty—but face their family members too.

These challenges are financial. In various ways, members of the armed forces—and in particular, members of the National Guard and the Reserves who leave jobs, homes, and families at a moment's notice—face tremendous economic burdens as a result of their willingness to serve. It is at least within my powers to do something about that.

Last week, I introduced legislation, “The Servicemembers and Military Families Financial Protection Act of 2001”, aimed at giving men and women called up for duty—and their families—new financial protection and peace of mind.

First, my bill will help ensure that members of the military who are called away from home still have a home to which they can return. When members are deployed and separated

from their jobs, their household income levels often drop dramatically. Yet, there are still bills to pay—in particular, the monthly rent or mortgage payment.

My bill would prohibit the removal of an activated military member's family from their place of residence due to a failure to meet monthly housing payments. This protection would be in place during the term of active duty and continue for up to an additional three months after active duty is over.

If a landlord initiates eviction proceedings during that period, a judge would be directed to first rule on whether the family's income has been “materially affected” by the military service. An eviction can only occur only if a judge finds that the family's income has not been so impacted. This relief would apply to a service member's family whose monthly housing payment is \$1,950 per month or less.

Under current law—the Sailors' and Soldiers' Civil Relief Act—such relief is limited to families whose monthly housing payments are \$1,200 or less. I seek to increase of that threshold by about 37.5 percent. I think that my proposal is reasonable. If you have given up your bed, and the comfort of home and the security of having your own roof over your head . . . and have traded that for an army cot in a pup tent or a barracks—you are certainly entitled, when your service is completed, to return to your home. And, just as important, you are entitled to know that even if you cannot be at home, at least your family is there.

The second major element of my proposal ensures that a family will be well provided for in the event—the very rare event, I hope—that something unfortunate occurs. Again, our country's reliance on members of the guard and reserves helps illustrate the need for a change in current law. Our military cannot operate without the contributions of civilian soldiers—medical personnel, academics familiar with foreign countries and languages, engineers and people from a vast array of fields—who agree to give up good jobs and good wages here at home to serve where and when they are needed.

The economic needs of full-time uniformed personnel are just as great, and only increase with more years of service. As it stands right now, however, significant barriers prohibit those men and women from knowing with confidence that their families will be adequately safeguarded if something should happen to them.

Today, armed services personnel are eligible for life insurance paid through an affordable monthly premium, and administered through the Service members' Group Life Insurance program, or SGLI. However, current law caps payouts at \$250,000. Far too low.

Meantime, it is standard practice for private life insurance policies to include clauses that deny payouts for deaths resulting from incidents occurring as part of war-related service. My bill would enable personnel covered by SGLI to opt for considerably higher payouts for their beneficiaries—if they so desire and if they are willing to pay for it.

Under my bill, military personnel could opt for coverage in increments of \$250,000 above the current ceiling, up to a total of \$1 million. This represents a potential increase of \$750,000 above the current limits for members of the Guard and Reserves; an increase of \$900,000 for uniformed personnel.